HOPE

HEALTH OPULENCE PEACE ENLIGHTENMENT

Volume 1 December-January, 1955-56 No. 5

FORTITUDE

The tree that never had to fight
For sun and sky and air and light;
That stood out in the open plain
And always got its share of rain;
Never became a forest king
But lived and died a scrubby thing!

The man who never had to toil,
Who never had to win his share
Of sun and sky and light and air,
Never became a manly man,
But lived and died as he began!

Good timber does not grow in ease;
The stronger wind, the tougher trees;
The farther sky, the greater length;
The more the storm, the more the strength;
By sun and cold, by rain and snows,
In tree or man, good timber grows!

R. C. Hanks

Also in this issue:

THE OTHER WISE MAN

THE MIRACLE

THERE IS NO DEATH

THE SPIRIT OF CHRISTMAS

Order from: HOPE, P. O. BOX #5, FLOURTOWN, PENNSYLVANIA
Price—$1.50 yearly (6 issues) U. S. A. and Canada
$2.50 yearly elsewhere

THE OTHER WISE MAN

By Henry Van Dyke

You know the story of the Three Wise Men of the East and how they travelled from far away places to offer their gifts at the manger in Bethlehem. But, have you ever heard the story of "The *Other* Wise Man," who also saw the star in its rising and set out to follow it; yet did not arrive with his brethren in the presence of the young Child, Jesus? Have you heard of the great desire of this fourth pilgrim and how it was denied, *yet accomplished in the denial*; of his many wanderings and the probations of his soul; of the long way of his *seeking* and the strange way of his *finding* the One Whom he sought—I would tell the tale as I have heard fragments of it in the Hall of Dreams, in the palace of the Heart of Man. . . .

In the days when Augustus Caesar was master of the many kings and Herod reigned in Jerusalem, there lived in the city of Ecbatana, among the mountains of Persia, a man named Artaban. His house stood close to the outermost of the walls which encircled the Royal Treasury. From his roof he could look over the seven-fold battlements to the hill where the summer palace of the Parthian Emperors glittered like a jewel in a crown.

Around the dwelling of Artaban spread a fair garden, watered by a score of streams descending from the slopes of Mount Orontes and made musical by innumerable birds. High above the trees, a dim glow of light shone through the curtained arches of the upper chamber, where the master of the house was holding council with his friends.

He stood by the doorway to greet his guests—a tall, dark man of about forty years, with brilliant eyes set near together under his broad brow and firm lines graven around his fine, thin lips; the brow of a dreamer and the mouth of a soldier; a man of sensitive feeling but inflexible will.

His robe was of pure white wool, thrown over a tunic of silk and a white, pointed cap, with long lapels at the sides, rested on his flowing black hair. It was the dress of the ancient priesthood of the Magi, called the "Fire-worshippers".

"Welcome!" he said, in his low, pleasant voice, as one after another entered the room. "Welcome, Abdus, Rhodaspes and Tigranes and you, my father, Abgarus. This house grows bright with the joy of your presence."

There were nine men, differing widely in age, but alike in the richness of their dress and in the massive golden collars around their necks, marking them as Parthian Nobles and in the winged circles of gold resting upon their breasts, the sign of the followers of Zoroaster.

They took their places around a small altar at the end of the room, where a tiny flame was burning. Artaban waving a barsom of thin tamarisk branches above the fire, fed it with dry sticks of pine and fragrant oils. Then he began the ancient chant of the Yasna and the voices of his companions joined in the hymn to Ahura-Mazda:

"We worship the Spirit Divine,
All wisdom and goodness possessing,
Surrounded by Holy Immortals,
The givers of bounty and blessing;
We joy in the work of His hands,
His truth and His power confessing.

We praise all the things that are pure,
For these are His only Creation;
The thoughts that are true, and the words
And the deeds that have won approbation;
These are supported by Him,
And for these we make adoration.

Hear us, O Mazda! Thou livest
In truth and in heavenly gladness;
Cleanse us from falsehood, and keep us
From evil and bondage to badness;
Pour out the light and the joy of Thy life
On our darkness and sadness.

Shine on our gardens and fields
Shine on our working and weaving;
Shine on the whole race of man
Believing and unbelieving;
Shine on us now through the night
Shine on us now in Thy might,
The flame of our holy love
And the song of our worship receiving".

The fire rose with the chant, throbbing as if the flame responded to the music, until it cast a bright illumination through the whole apartment, revealing its simplicity and splendour. It was, as the house of a man should be; an expression of the character and spirit of the master.

Artaban turned to his friends when the song was ended and said: "You have come tonight at my call, as the faithful scholars of Zoroaster, to renew your worship and rekindle your faith in the God of Purity, even as this fire has been rekindled on the altar. We worship not the fire, but Him of whom it is the chosen symbol, because it is the purest of all created things. It speaks to us of one who is Light and Truth. Is it not so, my father?"

"It is well said, my son. *The enlightened are never idolaters.* They lift the veil of form and go in to the shrine of reality. There new light and truth are coming to them continually through the old symbols."

"Hear me, then, my father and my friends," said Artaban, "while I tell you of the new light and truth that have come to me through the most ancient of all signs. We have searched the secrets of Nature together and studied the healing virtues of water, fire and plants. But the highest of all learning is the knowledge of the stars. To trace their course is to untangle the threads of the mystery of life from the beginning to the end. But is not our knowledge of them still incomplete? Are there not many stars still beyond our horizon?" There was a murmur of assent among the listeners.

"The stars," said Tigranes, "are the thoughts of the Eternal. They are numberless. The wisdom of the Magi is the greatest of all on Earth, because it knows its own ignorance—and that is the secret of power."

"That does not satisfy me," answered Artaban. "Do not our own books tell us that men will see the brightness of a great light; that the new sunrise will certainly appear in the appointed time?"

"That is true," said the voice of Abgarus; "every faithful disciple of Zoroaster knows the prophecy of the Avesta and carries the word in his heart. 'In that day Sosiosh the Victorious, shall arise out of the number of the prophets in the east country. Around Him shall shine a mighty brightness and He

shall make life everlasting, incorruptible, and immortal and the dead shall rise again.' "

Artaban turned to Abgarus with a glow on his face, and said: "My father, I have kept this prophecy in the secret place of my soul. Religion without a great hope would be like an altar without a living fire." He drew from his tunic two small rolls of fine parchment and unfolded them carefully upon his knee.

"In the years that are lost in the past, long before our fathers came into the land of Babylon, there were wise men in Chaldea, from whom the first of the Magi learned the secret of the heavens. Of these Balaam, the son of Beor, was one of the mightiest. Hear the words of his prophecy: 'There shall come a star out of Jacob, and a sceptre shall arise out of Israel.' "

Tigranes said with contempt: "The tribes of Israel are scattered through the mountains like lost sheep and from the remnant that dwells in Judea under the yoke of Rome neither star nor sceptre shall arise."

"Yet," answered Artaban, "it was the Hebrew Daniel, the mighty searcher of dreams, the counsellor of kings, the wise Belteshazzar, who was most honored and beloved of our great King Cyrus. These are the words he wrote: 'Know, therefore, and understand, that from the going forth of the commandment to restore Jerusalem unto the Anointed One, the Prince, the time shall be seven and threescore and two weeks.' "

"But, my son," said Abgarus, doubtfully, "these are mystical numbers. Who can interpret them, or who can find the key that shall unlock their meaning?"

Artaban answered: "It has been shown to me and to my three companions among the Magi—Caspar, Melchior, and Balthazar. We have searched the ancient tablets of Chaldea and computed the time. It falls in this year. We have studied the sky. We saw a new Star there, which shone for one night and then vanished. My three brothers are watching by the ancient Temple of the Seven Spheres, at Borsippa, in Babylonia and I am watching here. If the Star shines again, they will wait ten days for me at the Temple and then we will set out together for Jerusalem, to see and worship the Promised One Who shall be born King of Israel. I believe the sign will come I have made ready for the journey. I have sold my possessions

and bought these three jewels—a sapphire, a ruby and a pearl—to carry them as tribute to the King. I ask you to go with me on the pilgrimage, that we may have joy together in finding the Prince Who is worthy to be served."

He thrust his hand into the inmost fold of his girdle and drew out three great gems—one blue as a fragment of the night sky; one redder than a ray of sunrise; and one as pure as the peak of a snow-mountain at twilight. He laid them on the outspread scrolls before him.

His friends looked on with strange and alien eyes. A veil of doubt and mistrust came over their faces. Tigranes said: "Artaban, this is a vain dream. It comes from too much looking upon the stars. No king will ever rise from the broken race of Israel. Farewell."

Another said: "Artaban, the quest is not for me. But if thou must follow it, fare thee well."

And another said: "I am ill and unfit for hardship."

So, one by one, they left the house of Artaban. But Abgarus, the oldest and the one who loved him the best, lingered and said, gravely: "My son, it may be that the light of truth is in this sign that has appeared in the skies and that it will surely lead to the Prince and the mighty brightness; or, it may be that it is only a shadow of the light. But it is better to follow even the shadow of the best than to remain content with the worst. Those who would see wonderful things must often be ready to travel alone. I am too old for this journey, but my heart shall be a companion of thy pilgrimage day and night. Go in peace."

Then Abgarus went out of the azure chamber and Artaban was left in solitude. For a long time he stood and watched the flame that flickered and sank upon the altar. Then he crossed the hall to the terrace on the roof.

Far over the eastern plain a white mist stretched like a lake. But where the distant peaks of Zagros serrated the western horizon the sky was clear. Jupiter and Saturn rolled together like drops of lambent flame about to blend in one.

As Artaban watched Them, a steel-blue spark was born out of the darkness beneath, rounding itself with purple splendours to a crimson sphere. Tiny and infinitely remote, yet perfect in every part, it pulsated in the enormous vault as if the three

jewels in the Magian's girdle had mingled and been transformed into a living heart of light.

Artaban bowed his head and covered his brow with his hands. "It is the sign," he said. "The King is coming and I will go to meet him."

Artaban Starts His Journey

All night long, Vasda, the swiftest of Artaban's horses, had been waiting, saddled and bridled and shaking her bit as if she shared the eagerness of her master's purpose.

Before the white mist had begun to lift from the plain, the "Other Wise Man" was in the saddle riding swiftly westward. How close, how intimate is the comradeship between a man and his horse on a long journey! It is a silent, comprehensive friendship. They drink at the same springs and sleep under the same guardian stars. Surely, unless he is a pagan and an unbeliever, by whatever Name he calls upon his God, he will thank Him for this voiceless companionship and his morning prayer will embrace a double blessing—God bless us both, the horse and the rider.

Artaban must indeed ride wisely and well if he would keep the appointed hour with the other Magi; for the route was a hundred and fifty parasangs, and fifteen was the utmost that he could travel in a day. He knew Vasda's strength and pushed forward without anxiety, making the fixed distance every day.

He passed along the brown slopes of Mount Orontes and crossed the level plains of the Nisaeans. He traversed the fertile fields of Concabar and rode over many a cold and desolate pass, crawling painfully across the wind-swept shoulders of the hills; down many a black mountain-gorge, where the river roared and raced before him like a savage guide; through the oak-groves of Carine and the Gates of Zagros, walled in by precipices, into the ancient city of Chala, where the people of Samaria had been kept in captivity long ago. He rode out again by the mighty portal, even through the encircling hills, where he saw the image of the High Priest of the Magi sculptured on the wall of rock, with hand uplifted as if to bless the centuries of pilgrims; past the entrance of the narrow defile through which the river Gyndes foamed down to meet him; over the

broad rice-fields; following along the course of the river; through yellow corn-lands Artaban pressed onward until he arrived on the tenth day beneath the shattered walls of populous Babylon.

His horse, Vasda, was almost spent, and Artaban would gladly have turned into the city to find rest and refreshment for himself and for her, but he knew that it was three hours' journey yet to the Temple of the Seven Spheres and he must reach the place by midnight if he would find his comrades waiting. He did not halt, but rode steadily across the stubble-fields.

As she passed into the shadow Vasda slackened her pace and began to pick her way more carefully. Near the farther end of the darkness, caution seemed to fall upon her. She scented danger; it was not in her heart to fly from it—only to be prepared for it and to meet it wisely, as a good horse should do.

She felt her steps before her delicately, carrying her head low. At last, she gave a quick breath of anxiety and stood stock still before a dark object in the shadow of the last palm tree.

Artaban Aids the Traveler

Artaban dismounted. The dim starlight revealed the form of a man lying across the road. His humble dress and his face showed that he was probably one of the Hebrews who still dwelt in great numbers around the city. His pallid skin bore the mark of the deadly fever which ravaged the marshlands in autumn. The chill of death was in his lean hand and, as Artaban released it, the arm fell back inertly upon the motionless breast.

He turned away with a thought of pity, leaving the body to that strange burial which the Magians deemed most fitting—the funeral of the desert. But, as he turned, a long, faint sigh came from the man's lips. The bony fingers gripped the hem of the Magian's robe and held him fast.

Artaban's heart leaped to his throat, not with fear, but with resentment at the importunity of this delay. How could he stay here in the darkness to minister to a dying stranger? If he lingered but for an hour he could hardly reach Borsippa at the appointed time. His companions would think he had given up the journey. They would go without him. He would lose his quest.

If he went on now, the man would surely die. If Artaban stayed, life might be restored. His spirit throbbed with the urgency of the crises. Should he risk the great reward of his faith for the sake of a single deed of charity? Should he turn aside, if only for a moment, from the following of the star, to give a cup of cold water to a poor, perishing Hebrew?

"God of truth and purity," he prayed, "direct me in the holy path, the way of wisdom which Thou only knowest."

Then he turned to the sick man. Loosening the grasp of his hand, he carried him to a little mound at the foot of the palm tree.

He unbound the thick folds of the turban and opened the garment above the sunken breast. He brought water from one of the small canals near by and moistened the sufferer's brow and mouth. He mingled a draught of one of those simple but potent remedies which he carried always in his girdle—for the Magians were physicians as well as astrologers—and poured it slowly between the colorless lips. Hour after hour he labored as only a skilful healer can do. At last the man's strength returned; he sat up and looked about him.

"Who art thou?" he said, "and why hast thou sought me here to bring back my life?"

"I am Artaban the Magian, of Ecbatana, and I am going to Jerusalem in search of One Who is to be born King of the Jews, a great Prince and Deliverer of all men. I dare not delay any longer upon my journey, for the caravan that has waited for me may depart without me. See, here is all that I have left of bread and wine and here is a potion of healing herbs. When thy strength is restored thou canst find the dwellings of the Hebrews among the houses of Babylon."

The Jew raised his trembling hand solemnly to heaven. "Now may the God of Abraham and Isaac and Jacob bless and prosper the journey of this merciful one and bring him in peace to his desired haven. Stay! I have nothing to give thee in return—only this—that I can tell thee where the Messiah must be sought. Our prophets have said that he should be born not in Jerusalem, but in Bethlehem of Judah. May the Lord bring thee in safety to that place, because thou hast had pity upon the sick."

It was already long past midnight. Artaban rode in haste, and Vasda ran eagerly through the silent plain and swam the channels of the river. She put forth the last remnant of her strength and fled over the ground like a gazelle.

The first beam of the rising Sun sent a long shadow before her as she entered upon the final stadium of the journey. The eyes of Artaban, anxiously scanning the great mound of Nimrod and the Temple of the Seven Spheres, could discern no trace of his friends. Artaban rode swiftly around the hill. He dismounted and climbed to the highest terrace, looking out toward the west; but there was no sign of the caravan of the Wise Men, far or near.

Artaban Misses Caravan—Sells Sapphire—His First Gift

At the edge of the terrace, he saw a little cairn of broken bricks and under them a piece of papyrus. He caught it up and read: "We have waited past the midnight and can delay no longer. We go to find the King. Follow us across the desert."

Artaban sat down upon the ground and covered his head in despair.

"How can I cross the desert," said he, "with no food and with a spent horse? I must return to Babylon, *sell my sapphire* and buy a train of camels and provision for the journey. I may never overtake my friends. Only God, the merciful, knows whether I shall not lose the sight of the King because I tarried to show mercy."

There was a silence in the Hall of Dreams, where I was listening to the story of "The Other Wise Man". Through this silence I saw, but very dimly, his figure passing over the dreary undulations of the desert, high upon the back of his camel, rocking steadily onward like a ship over the waves. Arid and inhospitable mountain-ranges rose before him, furrowed with dry channels of ancient torrents, white and ghastly as scars on the face of nature. Shifting hills of treacherous sand were heaped like tombs along the horizon. By day, the fierce heat pressed its intolerable burden on the quivering air. No living creature moved on the swooning Earth. By night, the jackals prowled and barked in the distance and the lion made the black ravines echo with his roaring, while a bitter, blighting chill followed the fever of the day. Through heat

and cold, the Magian moved steadily onward.

Then I saw the gardens and orchards of Damascus with their sloping swards inlaid with bloom and their thickets of myrrh and roses. I saw the long, snowy ridge of Hermon and the valley of the Jordan, and the blue waters of the Lake of Galilee. Through all these, I followed the figure of Artaban moving steadily onward, until he arrived at Bethlehem. It was the third day after the three Wise Men had come to that place and had found Mary and Joseph, with the Child, Jesus and had laid their gifts of gold, frankincense and myrrh at His feet.

Then "The Other Wise Man" drew near, weary, but full of hope, bearing the ruby and his pearl to offer to the King. "Now at last," he said, "I shall surely find Him, though I be alone and later than my brethren. This is the place of which the Hebrew exile told me that the prophets had spoken and here I shall behold the rising of the great light."

Artaban Gives Ruby—His Second Gift—to Save a Life

The streets of the village seemed to be deserted and Artaban wondered whether the men had all gone up to the hill pastures to bring down their sheep. From the open door of a cottage he heard the sound of a woman's voice singing softly. He entered and found a young mother hushing her baby to rest. She told him of the strangers from the far East who had appeared in the village three days ago and how they said that a Star had guided them to the place where Joseph of Nazareth was lodging with his wife and her newborn child; of how they had paid reverence to the child and given him many rich gifts.

"But the travelers disappeared again," she continued, "as suddenly as they had come. The man of Nazareth took the child and his mother and fled away that same night secretly and it was whispered that they were going to Egypt. Ever since, there has been a spell upon the village; something evil hangs over it. They say that the Roman soldiers are coming from Jerusalem to force a new tax from us so the men have driven the flocks and herds far back among the hills and hidden themselves to escape it."

Artaban listened to her gentle speech and the child in her arms stretched out its hands to grasp at the winged circle of gold on his breast. His heart warmed to the touch. The

young mother laid the baby in its cradle and rose to minister to the wants of the strange guest that Fate had brought into her house. She set food before him, the plain fare of peasants, but willingly offered and, therefore, full of refreshment for the soul as well as the body. Artaban accepted it gratefully.

Suddenly there came the noise of a wild confusion in the streets; a shrieking and wailing of women's voices; a clashing of swords and a desperate cry: "The soldiers! the soldiers of Herod! They are killing our children."

The young mother's face grew white with terror. She clasped her child to her bosom and crouched motionless in the darkest corner of the room.

Artaban went quickly and stood in the doorway of the house. His broad shoulders filled the portal from side to side and the peak of his white cap all but touched the lintel.

The soldiers came hurrying down the street with bloody hands and dripping swords. At the sight of the stranger in his imposing dress they hesitated with surprise. The captain of the band approached the threshold to thrust him aside, but Artaban did not stir. His face was as calm as though he were watching the Star and in his eyes there burned that steady radiance before which even the leopard shrinks and the blood-hound pauses in his leap. He held the soldier silently for an instant, and then said in a low voice:

"I am all alone in this place and I am waiting to give this jewel to the prudent captain who will leave me in peace."

He showed the ruby, glistening in his hand like a great drop of blood. The captain was amazed at the splendor of the gem. He stretched out his hand and took the ruby.

"March on!" he cried to his men, "there is no child here. The house is empty."

Artaban re-entered the cottage. He turned his face to the East and prayed: "God of truth, forgive my sin! I have said the thing that is not, to save the life of a child. Two of my gifts are gone. I have spent for man that which was meant for God. Shall I ever be worthy to see the face of the King?"

But the voice of the woman, weeping for joy behind him, said very gently: "Because thou hast saved the life of my little one, may the Lord bless thee and keep thee; the Lord make His face to shine upon thee and be gracious unto thee; the Lord lift up His countenance upon thee and give thee peace."

Again there was a silence in the Hall of Dreams and I understood that the years of Artaban were flowing very swiftly. I caught only a glimpse here and there, of the river of his life shining through the mist that concealed its course.

I saw him among the throngs in populous Egypt, seeking for traces of the household that had come down from Bethlehem, finding them in Heliopolis, in New Babylon beside the Nile—traces so faint that they vanished before him continually.

I saw him again at the foot of the pyramids. He looked up into the face of the Sphinx and vainly tried to read the meaning of the calm eyes and smiling mouth. Was there a touch of pity and encouragement in that inscrutable smile—a promise that even the defeated should attain a victory; the disappointed should discover a prize; and the wandering should come into the haven at last?

I saw him again in an obscure house of Alexandria, taking counsel with a Rabbi. The venerable man, bending over the rolls of parchment on which the prophecies of Israel were written, read aloud the pathetic words which foretold the sufferings of the promised Messiah.

"Remember, my son," said he, "the King whom thou seekest is not to be found in a palace, nor among the rich and powerful. No son of Abraham will ever again rival the power which Joseph had in the palaces of Egypt, or the magnificence of Solomon enthroned in Jerusalem. But the light for which the world is waiting is a new light; the glory that shall rise out of patient and triumphant suffering. *The Kingdom which is to be established forever is a new Kingdom, the royalty of unconquerable love.*

"'I do not know how this shall come to pass but this I know . . . those who seek Him will do well to look among the poor and the lowly; the sorrowful and the oppressed."

So I saw "The Other Wise Man" again and again, traveling from place to place and searching among the people with whom the little family from Bethlehem might, perhaps, have found a refuge. In all this populous and intricate world of anguish, though he found none to worship, he found many to help. He fed the hungry, clothed the naked, healed the sick and his years passed more swiftly than the weaver's shuttle.

It seemed almost as if he had forgotten his quest. Once I

saw him for a moment as he stood alone at sunrise, waiting at the gate of a Roman prison. He had taken from a secret resting place in his bosom the pearl, the last of his jewels. As he looked at it, a mellower lustre, a soft and iridescent light, full of shifting gleams of azure and rose, trembled upon its surface. It seemed to have absorbed some reflection of the lost sapphire and ruby. So the secret purpose of a noble life draws into itself the memories of past joy and sorrow. All that has helped it; all that has hindered it; is transfused by a subtle magic into its very essence.

Then, at last, while I was thinking of this pearl and of its meaning, I heard the end of the story of "The Other Wise Man."

Three and thirty years of the life of Artaban had passed away. He was still a pilgrim and a seeker after light. His hair was now white as the wintry snow, and his eyes, that once flashed like flames of fire, were dull as embers among the ashes.

Worn and weary and ready to die, *but still looking for the King*, he had come for the last time to Jerusalem. Now it seemed as if he must make one more effort and something whispered in his heart that, at last, *he might succeed.*

It was the season of the Passover and the city was thronged with strangers. The children of Israel had returned to the Temple for the great feast. On this day a singular agitation was visible in the multitude. A secret tide was sweeping them all one way. Artaban joined a group of people from his own country—Parthian Jews who had come up to keep the Passover—inquiring of them the cause of the tumult and where they were going.

"We are going," they answered, "to the place called Golgotha where there is to be an execution. Have you not heard what has happened? Two famous robbers are to be crucified, and with them another, called Jesus of Nazareth, a man who has done many wonderful works among the people, so that they love him greatly; but the priests and elders have said that he must die because he gave himself out to be the Son of God. Pilate has sent him to the cross because he said that he was the 'King of the Jews.'"

How strangely these words fell upon the tired heart of Artaban. They had led him for a lifetime over land and sea. The King had arisen, but he had been denied and cast out. He was about to perish. Could it be the same Who had been born in Bethlehem thirty-three years ago, at whose birth the Star had appeared in Heaven and of Whose coming the prophets had spoken?

Artaban's heart beat unsteadily with that troubled, doubtful apprehension which is the excitement of old age; but he said within himself: "The ways of God are stronger than the thoughts of men and it may be that I shall find the King, at last, in the hands of His enemies and shall come in time to offer my pearl for His ransom before He dies."

Artaban Gives Last Gift—the Pearl—as Ransom

So he followed the multitude with slow and painful steps. Just beyond the entrance of the Damascus gate a troop of Macedonian soldiers came down the street, dragging a young girl with torn dress and dishevelled hair. As the Magian paused to look at her with compassion, she broke suddenly from her tormentors and threw herself at his feet. She had seen his white cap and the winged circle on his breast.

"Have pity on me," she cried, "and save me, for the sake of the God of Purity! I also am a daughter of the true religion which is taught by the Magi. My father was a merchant of Parthia, but he is dead and I am seized for his debts to be sold as a slave. Save me from worse than death!"

Artaban trembled. It was the old conflict in his soul, which had come to him in the palm grove of Babylon and in the cottage at Bethlehem; the conflict between the expectation of faith and the impulse of love. Twice the gift which he had consecrated to the worship of religion had been drawn to the service of humanity. This was the third trial, the ultimate probation, the final and irrevocable choice.

Was it his great opportunity, or his last temptation? One thing only was clear in the darkness of his mind—it was inevitable . . . and does not the inevitable come from God?

One thing only was sure to his divided heart—to rescue this helpless girl would be a true deed of love; and is not love the light of the soul?

He took the pearl from his bosom. Never had it seemed so luminous, so full of tender, living lustre. "This is thy ransom, daughter! It is the last of my treasures which I kept for the King."

While he spoke, the darkness of the sky deepened and shuddering tremors ran through the Earth, heaving convulsively like the breast of one who struggles with mighty grief. The walls of the houses rocked to and fro. Stones were loosened and crashed into the street. The soldiers fled in terror, but Artaban and the girl whom he had ransomed crouched helpless beneath the wall of the Praetorium.

What had he to fear? What had he to hope? He had given away the last remnant of his tribute for the King. He had parted with the last hope of finding Him. The quest was over and it had failed. But, even in that thought, accepted and embraced, there was peace. It was not resignation. It was not submission. It was something more profound and searching. He knew that all was well, because he had done the best that he could from day to day. He had been true to the light that had been given to him. He had looked for more and if he had not found it, if a failure was all that came out of his life, doubtless that was the best that was possible. He had not seen the revelation of "life everlasting, incorruptible and immortal," but he knew that even if he could live his earthly life over again, it could not be otherwise than it had been.

One more lingering pulsation of the earthquake quivered through the ground. A heavy tile, shaken from the roof, fell and struck the old man on the temple. He lay breathless and pale, with his head resting on the girl's shoulder, the blood trickling from the wound. As she bent over him, fearing that he was dead, there came a voice through the twilight, very small and still, like music sounding from a distance, in which the notes are clear but the words are lost. The girl turned to see if someone had spoken from the window above them, but she saw no one.

Then the old man's lips began to move, as if in answer and she heard him say in the Parthian tongue:

"Not so, my Lord! For when saw I thee an hungered and fed thee? Or thirsty and gave thee drink? When saw I thee a stranger and took thee in? Or naked and clothed thee? Three and thirty years have I looked for Thee; but I have never seen Thy face, nor ministered to Thee, my King."

He ceased, but the sweet voice came again and again. The maid heard it, very faint and far away; but now it seemed as though she understood the words:

"Verily I say unto thee, inasmuch as thou hast done it unto one of the least of these My brethren, thou hast done it unto Me."

A calm radiance of wonder and joy lighted the pale face of Artaban, like the first ray of dawn on a snowy mountain peak. A long breath of relief exhaled gently from his lips.

His journey was ended. His treasures were accepted. "The Other Wise Man" had found the King.

THE GREAT WHITE BROTHERHOOD

(Lives of Great Men and Women Who have Blessed the Human Race)

When a great spiritual blessing is released from the heart of God, it comes to Earth through individuals who volunteer to assist God to bring to the outer attention of the people, the benefaction which He has designed. These individuals, consciously aware of their spiritual mission, represent The Father on Earth. At the Christmas Season, we think particularly of the beloved Master Jesus Who said: "He who has seen *Me* has seen The Father".

The Master Jesus was assisted in His mission by His Holy Mother, Mary, Who held for Him the "Immaculate Concept" of His Divinity; by His kind Father, Joseph, Who guarded and protected the Holy Family; by untold Protectors from the Angelic Kingdom, Archangels Gabriel, Michael and Raphael. There were others, also, who prepared for His coming—John, the Baptist, Anne and Joachim (the parents of Beloved Mary), the disciples and many others whose names are not recorded in holy scripture. All of these Divine Beings as well as those unascended, were members of that mystic order known as "The Great White Brotherhood" whose sole purpose in the universe is to *forward the Will of God*!

At this Christmas Season, we give our gratitude and blessing to all who participated in the founding and sustaining of the Christian Ministry and to all those sincere, devout men and women who endeavor to expand the Truths brought forth by the Master Jesus at the beginning of this Era.

Thinking back upon that first Christmas morning, we can visualize Joseph, standing with the Infant, at the door of the stable, and the beloved Mary resting after the birth of Her Son.

A Tribute
to Saint Joseph and Holy Mary, Mother of Jesus

"And it came to pass that, at the very beginning of the Christian Dispensation, Joseph stood by the Beloved Mary and received into His arms the Beloved Infant Jesus Who was to become the Master—the very first impetus of that entire Christian era. Joseph saw the soft down of that baby head. He saw those beautiful eyes which had not yet focused upon the plane of shadowed consciousness in which Jesus was to function. He touched those petal-soft hands that one day would call the dead to life and through which would flow the energies to restore the withered limbs and cause the blind to see. As Joseph looked at that Infant form, at that hour there did not seem much except faith to carry them forward in the hope of establishing a Creed which would become the life-breath of millions.

And the days came when Joseph walked the long way into Egypt with that Infant and the beautiful Mary . . . . . For those baby feet, Joseph made the first pair of sandals. He listened often as the Infant's Mother spoke to Her Son about the importance of and devotion to the souls of men, which each man should feel. Of the tenderness of the Eternal, Jesus learned much in that simple life.

For Him Mary held the Immaculate Concept—the pattern of His Perfection—the God design which He had come to manifest *and not once did She relinquish that picture of perfection.* Within Jesus, Mary saw His love of life, for He would often bring to Her a bruised flower or a bird with a broken wing, that it might be restored through love. Mary saw this delicate-minded boy rub shoulders with the lame, the halt, the diseased of mind and body and it was then that She taught Him that He had the power to magnify *anything He chose to accept as real;* that He might magnify an appearance of illness and distress or He might magnify the Lord of Life; that His soul was a magnet and that whatsoever His attention connected with,—*that* His soul would magnify!

And when He came to Mary with bruises on His little feet or knees, She would say: 'We shall not magnify that hurt or scar; We shall magnify the Lord'. Then all three together would call the Presence of God into action until perfection manifested to the physical sight and the bruised appearance was no more.

With Her Own hands, Mary fashioned the little tunic which He wore when She took Jesus to the Temple of the High Priest each day for His discipline and instruction. She watched Him as the God power waxed strong within Him until, in His Own right, He became One with His Heavenly Father and a 'conductor' of His miraculous power.

Even then, as They lived so simply (for Joseph earned Their meager bread as a carpenter), how could They be certain that one day the Christian Religion would be accepted by millions; great church edifices would be builded and thousands of voices joined in song and adoration to that once small Child and His Holy Family?

And yet, it has been done!"—*Pearls of Great Price*

THE SPIRIT OF CHRISTMAS

December 15, 1955

DEAR, DEAR CLAIRE:

God bless you! It was good to hear from you last week, especially when I know how busy you are, getting ready for the holidays. We are busy here too, of course, but it is such a joyous "busy ness"—particularly when you *enter in the "Spirit* of Christmas". Coming across a letter I received sometime ago from a good friend about just this subject, I thought you might enjoy parts of it, so here they are:

"The Spirit of Christmas"—*what* is it? The spirit of a person, place, condition or thing, is the *reality* of it— the activating principle—that which makes it 'tick', we sometimes say. So, since we hear so much about The Spirit of Christmas, let's find out *what, who* and *where* It is!

What is a Spirit? Since nothing can exist without light (and light is life), then a 'spirit' is light— a ray of light from the Sun and the Spirit of Christmas is the light of Christmas, projected into the consciousness of mankind at the darkest time of the year, just after the shortest day, symbolical of the coming of our Beloved Jesus into physical embodiment. He took His final incarnation on Earth at one of the darkest periods of this world's history. Because of His embodiment at that time and the tremendous service He rendered through it, by revealing the true nature of the Heavenly Father to

all life, the Earth can never again sink into those depths of human suffering and discord. Think you that it is accidental that Christmas comes near the end of the year and during its darkest period, so far as physical light is concerned? No!

'Man's extremity is God's opportunity' and so, when humanity has tried everything else, has been disappointed enough and is near the end of its rope, so to speak, only then do they turn to the greater Power than themselves and cry: 'O, God! Help us!' Thus they open the door for the Christ Self of each one to come through and take command of the outer personality and its affairs. The individual *must give his attention* to God for a moment at least, in order to let the Holy Christ Self (through Whom God works) to give him assistance. *Otherwise, such assistance cannot come.*

Many people have seen the lovely painting of the Christ with the lantern in His hand, knocking at a closed door. At the first showing of this picture, the painter was criticized for not painting a latch on the door. Said he: 'The latch of *that* door is on the *inside*!' In other words, no one and no thing can enter our worlds unless we open to them from within ourselves, by giving them our attention.

Mankind's attention is the magnet and open door which draws into his experience that upon which the attention is fixed. Therefore, when the attention of the masses of mankind is upon the qualities of the Spirit of Christmas, that Great Being's essence flows into their worlds, intensifying their own feelings of mellowness, generosity and forgiveness. That is why the whole general atmosphere of Earth is saturated with these qualities of feeling at Christmas, especially in the lands where that ceremony is observed.

The word 'Christ-mass' means the focusing of the attention of the masses of the people upon the Christ (Holy Christ Self of each one, which Beloved Jesus called 'the Mediator between God and man'). Their attention upon the Christ allows Its finer impulses to flow into and through them, manifesting in outer physical action, at least for this Season.

Who is the Spirit of Christmas? Besides the consciousness and feeling of the people of this Christ activity, there is an actual, living, breathing Intelligent Being from the Realms of Light Who is the Great Spirit of Christmas. She controls and stands vigilant guard over the increased radiation of light

and love from the Higher Realms at this Season of the year when the attention of mankind draws that added light into the atmosphere of the Earth and this world of form. The demand for a thing compels its supply to be released and when the attention of the people is on the Christ activity of giving, that activity draws down upon both giver and receiver more light, containing many blessings from above. This light substance saturates the atmosphere in which mankind move and they breathe it in automatically, expressing more of the Christ Spirit which the Beloved Jesus came to bring.

The Great Being—'The Spirit of Christmas'—is the living embodiment of all those Christ qualities which Beloved Jesus brought to mankind through His daily living; those qualities which bring peace on Earth and the feeling of Universal Brotherhood (good-will) among men. This Intelligent Being of light is from the Sun and, since all life (which is light) is one, that 'Spirit' is one with the ray of light which is anchored in every physical heart and gives it the rhythm of beating. This 'Spirit of Christmas' is a Being of Eternal Youth, although She has been in existence since the birth of our Beloved Jesus, some 2000 years ago, the very first Christmas on this planet Earth. She grows more and more beautiful and powerful each year as She absorbs into Herself and radiates out again to bless the race, all the loving, selfless consciousness of Christmas giving. However, She has but one opportunity a year so to bless mankind for only at this Season is She openly acknowledged by the people.

Where is the 'Spirit of Christmas'? The Great Being to Whom we have referred, stands in the actual atmosphere of Earth during the Christmas season but, being all light—Her consciousness is embodied in every cell and atom of the bodies of the people of this planet, the Earth Itself and Infinite space. All life is light! It is a gift from the Father of all—the gift of Himself—*and this gift gives of Itself, constantly to all!* All of life, in its original state, coming from the heart of the Father, pours forth only perfection every second, every minute, every hour of every day and would express that full perfection of the Realms from whence it came, right here—in this physical appearance world—if it were not interfered with by the human consciousness, which is constantly stamping upon it the imperfect patterns of its own discordant habits of

thought, feeling, spoken word and deed.

So, once each year, there comes the light of Christmas—the 'Spirit of Christmas', reminding us of the meaning and reality of life. Why do we give gifts to each other at this Season of the year? We give gifts in gratitude to the God in each one for the love and light of each other which we have enjoyed during the year which has passed. Why did the Wise Men bring gifts to the Christ? In gratitude to God for the gift of His coming *for they understood* what that meant to the world.

The gifts of the outer world are lovely and often desirable but the greatest gift that can be given is the kindness, understanding, happiness, unconditional eternal forgiveness, peace and goodwill of Divine love to all, everywhere, every day.

Mankind acknowledge 'The Spirit of Christmas' *but once a year*. The Beloved Jesus embodied in His *daily living* that 'Spirit' and brought Her gifts of healing, freedom and victory over human distress, teaching all men that this Spirit is practical and eternal—not just to be lived at one season of the year. Jesus was the living example of what mankind should be *ALL the time*—the Christ Spirit of blessing to all."

A very Merry Christmas to you all.

Lovingly always, Bea

(Mrs.) B. A. Blessing

THE SECRET OF GIVING

"For God so loved the world, that He gave His only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in Him should not perish, but have everlasting life"—(John 3:16).

At the Christmas Season, men, women and children all over the world celebrate the birth of the Master Jesus, by endeavoring to give (as God gave His Son on that first Christmas morn), *something of themselves* to their loved ones, their fellowman and to God Himself.

The *"spirit" which motivates* any gift determines its pleasureable effect upon the receiver. All of us know of gifts given hurriedly, impatiently or grudgingly, which have brought no joy to the receiver, even though the gift itself might be of great material value. Conversely, we know of the happiness and blessing that radiates from a simple thing *given from the heart*. It is wise, therefore, particularly at the Christmas Season,

to ask the Heavenly Father to saturate our gifts and giving with *His Own feeling of happiness and love* which prompted His gift of the Beloved Jesus to the world of men. Let those gifts be given with the same joy and desire to benefit the one to whom we proffer them, in Jesus' Name.

Some time ago, a gentleman of our acquaintance became a member of a spiritual activity wherein he was told that the practice of "tithing" a portion of his income to assist in sustaining the activity, was a necessary part of his membership. He was also told that as a result of such "tithing" (placing a percentage of his weekly income aside as a gift to the organization) he would experience greater wealth and happiness for himself. He obediently observed the rules but his income, rather than increasing, grew less and less. He was unhappy and distressed in mind, body and affairs. A good friend, who knew the spiritual Law, asked this gentleman if he *enjoyed* his "tithing"—giving a portion of his income to God, through the activity with which he had become affiliated. The tither seemed surprised at this idea and, upon self-examination, found that he resented the giving but complied with the law *from a sense of "duty" and a hope of personal gain*. The friend told him he would not reap the natural results of his generosity until he *enjoyed* giving to God that weekly stipend. Sincere and honest with himself, the student saw the logic in this statement. It took him some time to convince himself *in his feelings* that such giving was opening the door for him to thank His God and to receive greater abundance—to be used again in ever-widening service. Then the "tithing" became a joy to him and his finances increased both steadily and rapidly.

The law regarding the obtaining and sustenance of opulence requires a balance between giving and receiving. The new born infant must give his first outgoing breath in order to receive the life giving energies on the indrawn breath. If a man does not release the breath from his lungs, he soon dies. This is likewise true of wealth and material opulence. Stagnation, which comes from hoarding, allows no room for God to send new blessings and opulence into the world of the miser. Spiritually, the individual who gives of the knowledge and understanding which he already has, receives greater inspiration by reason of his giving.

THE NEW YEAR

New Opportunity for Success

At the close of each year, the Law of Mercy allows everyone the opportunity of calling on the Law of Forgiveness for transgressions against God, man and life in general, so that he may receive absolution from the results of his mistakes of the past twelve-month period, entering the New Year with renewed spiritual vitality.

"New Year's resolutions" are often made but too soon forgotten in the course of daily living! The Presence of God within each beating heart (which Presence prompts such resolutions), offers each individual opportunity to live up to them by the acceptance and use of the Spiritual guidance and strength which will be radiated to any and all who will ask the Heavenly Father for the assistance he requires. This will enable him to live the next year on a higher plane of experience than he did the year before. **Resolutions never can be permanently sustained merely by effort of human will.** Sincere prayer, coupled with the co-operation of the outer self, giving daily attention to the written record of those resolutions, will enable the individual to make for himself a new way of life. **Keep at it!** Start every day by reading over your New Year's resolutions, to remind yourself of what you wish to accomplish and end the day with a short period of introspection as to how you have co-operated that day with the promptings of the God Presence within you (Who caused you to make such resolutions). **Live one day at a time!** Do not allow self-justification or self-condemnation to spoil tomorrow. Along this line, it would be well, too, to observe Jesus' admonition to "tell no man."

Return Address: **HOPE**
c/o George S. Ferguson Co.,
15 N. 7th St., Philadelphia 6, Pa.

BULK RATE
U.S. POSTAGE
PAID
PERMIT No. 2074
Phila., Pa.

Form 3547 Requested